

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1188

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: LAST CHANCE CONVENTION SESSION

REF: BELFAST 48 AND PREVIOUS

1. SUMMARY: PHASE TWO CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION MET BRIEFLY FEB. 3 AND ADJOURNED BY ALMOST UNANIMOUS AGREEMENT TO RESUME PRIVATE, SEPARATE INTER-PARTY TALKS. LOYALIST LEADERS AT RALLIES CONTINUE DEMONSTRATE UNWILLINGNESS TO YIELD ON ISSUE OF PARTNERSHIP IN GOVERNMENT EVEN IN EMERGENCY COALITION. SDLP HAS MADE SERIOUS ATTEMPT CLARIFY FOR LOYALIST VOTERS PARTY STAND ON SUPPORT FOR POLICE AND ASPIRATIONS FOR UNITED IRELAND. THERE HINTS THAT REVISED SYSTEM DIRECT RULE FOLLOWING A FAILURE TO ACHIEVE POLITICAL AGREEMENT IN CONVENTION WOULD BE EVEN LESS SATISFACTORY THAN THAT PREVAILING. FEBRUARY RELATIVELY PEACEFUL SO FAR AND PROVISIONAL IRA PROBABLY AWAITING DEATH FRANK STAGG. END SUMMARY.

2. NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION RECONVENED FEB. 3 AND MET FOR 39 MINUTES BEFORE ADJOURNING TO BEGIN SEPARATE AND PRIVATE INTER-PARTY TALKS CHAIRED  
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BY CONVENTION CHAIRMAN SIR ROBERT LOWRY. MOTION TO

PROCEED WITH TALKS INTRODUCED BY CAPTAIN AUSTIN ARDILL FOR UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) AND SECONDED BY AUSTIN CURRIE OF SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP). ALL OTHER PARTIES, EXCEPT FOR ONE-MAN ULSTER DOMINION GROUP (UDG), RECORDED AGREEMENT WITH MOTION. SESSIONS BEGAN WITH LESS CONTENTIOUS MEETINGS AND SDLP AND UUUC NOT EXPECTED MEET UNTIL NEXT WEEK.

3. MOST OF FIRST CONVENTION SESSION TAKEN UP WITH SPEECH BY PROFESSOR KENNEDY LINDSAY (UDG) RECORDING HIS REFUSAL PARTICIPATE IN TALKS DESIGNED TO "INSTITUTIONALIZE SECTARIANISM". SPEECH WAS HIGHLY PERSONAL AND UNINTENTIONALLY AMUSING ATTACK ON ALMOST EVERY POLITICAL GROUP IN CONVENTION AND MANY INDIVIDUALS. AMONG OTHER THINGS LINDSAY HINTED THAT WILLIAM CRAIG HAD A FONDNESS FOR ALCOHOL AND CHARGED THAT CRAIG HAD BEEN INFLUENCED IN HIS CONSTITUTIONAL VIEWS BY CIVIL SERVANTS JAMES ALLAN (CBE) AND SIR FRANK COOPER. SPEECH HAD DUAL EFFECT OF RELAUNCHING CONVENTION WITH MEASURE OF SHARED GOOD HUMOR AND OF POINTING OUT ONE LEVEL OF ABSURDITY IN ULSTER POLITICS.

4. CONVENTION RECONVENED, AS CHAIRMAN SAID, WITH BACKGROUND OF HOPE RATHER THAN OPTIMISM. LOYALISTS ARE CONTINUING SERIES RALLIES FEATURING SPEECHES BY HARRY WEST, IAN PAISLEY AND ERNEST BAIRD IN WHICH THEY REGULARLY REITERATE, (A) THEIR RESPONSIVENESS TO DEMOCRATIC PRINCIPLES AS EXPRESSED BY NORTHERN IRELAND VOTERS THROUGH BALLOT BOX AND, (B) THEIR INABILITY TO DEPART FROM THE WILL OF THE MAJORITY BY SHARING EXECUTIVE POWER EVEN IN TEMPORARY COALITION WITH THOSE WHO HELD ALLEGIANCE TO ("WITH SOME HOLDING CITIZENSHIP IN") A FOREIGN STATE. IN BANBRIDGE FEB. 3 TRIUMVIRATE JOINED BY ENOCH POWELL. SDLP IN UNUSUAL ACT HAS FULL PAGE AD IN (LOYALIST) NEWS LETTER FEB. 4, "AN OPEN LETTER TO THE LOYALIST PEOPLE." OPEN LETTER GIVES SDLP VIEWS ON (A) LAW AND ORDER AND (B) STATUS OF NORTHERN IRELAND. IN ONE KEY PHRASE SDLP STATEMENT EXPRESSES QUALIFICATION THAT, WHILE REALLY EFFECTIVE ACTION ON LAW AND ORDER DEPENDS ON RESPONSIBILITY RESTING IN HANDS OF ELECTED REPRESENTATIVES "... THE SDLP GIVES FULL SUPPORT TO THE POLICE IN UPHOLDING THE RULE OF UNCLASSIFIED

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LAW AND IN SEEKING OUT ANY CRIMINAL. WE CALL ON THE ENTIRE COMMUNITY TO DO LIKEWISE. NO CRIMINAL CAN EXPECT PROTECTION FROM OUR POLICY." IN OTHER KEY PHRASES THE SDLP UNDERLINED IT SEEKING NEW AND AGREED IRELAND. SDLP BELIEF IS THAT THERE CAN BE NO CHANGE IN STATUS NORTHERN IRELAND WITHOUT CONSENT MAJORITY OF PEOPLE - SDLP COMMITTED NOT ONLY TO SUPPORTING BUT DEFENDING ANY NEW AGREED INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT - SDLP COMMITTED

TO ASK REPUBLIC TO DO LIKEWISE - SDLP PRIORITY WILL BE TO WORK AT ALL TIMES FOR BEST INTERESTS OF PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND - ONLY UNITY OF REAL VALUE IS THAT WHICH COMES ABOUT BY FREE AGREEMENT. IT APPEARS SDLP HAS GONE AS FAR AS POLITICALLY POSSIBLE TO MEET CRAIG DEMANDS FOR CLARIFICATION OF POLICIES (REFTEL).

5. IF CARROT OF DEVOLVED GOVERNMENT INSUFFICIENT INCENTIVE FOR ULSTER POLITICIANS, STICK OF CONTINUED DIRECT RULE AS ONLY ALTERNATIVE NOW REMAINS MUCH IN EVIDENCE. LATEST APPEARANCE IS THEORY, (APPARENTLY ADVANCED BY BRIAN FAULKNER FROM HIS IMPRESSIONS GAINED IN MEETINGS WITH NORTHERN IRELAND OFFICE OFFICIALS) THAT DIRECT RULE AFTER CONVENTION WOULD BE LESS BENIGN AND MORE REMOTE THAN HERETOFORE. SPECULATION IS THAT SECRETARY OF STATE WOULD MOVE HEADQUARTERS FROM STORMONT TO LONDON AND NORTHERN IRELAND ADMINISTRATION WOULD BE CENTERED THERE. SOME OBSERVERS POINT OUT THIS WOULD ALSO MAKE IT EASIER TO REPLACE MERLYN REES AS SECRETARY OF STATE. PROSPECTS SUCH A MOVE CANNOT CHEER PEOPLE OF NORTHERN IRELAND OR WORKING LEVEL CIVIL SERVANTS WHO BELIEVE DECISION MAKING DIFFICULT ENOUGH UNDER PRESENT CIRCUMSTANCES.

6. FEBRUARY HAS BEGUN RELATIVELY PEACEFUL. THIS IS PROBABLY NOT BECAUSE OF CONVENTION BUT BECAUSE PROVISIONAL IRA GATHERING FORCES FOR RENEWED CAMPAIGN OF VIOLENCE AT DEATH HUNGER-STRIKER FRANK STAGG.

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